

INFORMATION REPORT

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SOURCE

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General Labor Situation in Cyprus

1. The largest and most important labor organization in Cyprus is the Pan-Cyprian Federation of Labor, commonly known as the Old Trade Union. This union is completely controlled by the AKEL Party, which is the Communist party of Cyprus. The Old Trade Union is in effect a branch of the Communist Party. Its leaders are Communists, although not all of its members are Communists. Opposed to the Communist union is the right-wing New Trade Union. It is a new organization, still greatly inferior in strength to the Communist union. The present labor situation on the island is characterized by a bitter struggle between the left and the right for domination.

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2. During the past year, a number of strikes have been called by the Communist union. The most important of these was against the American-owned Cyprus Mines Corporation, details of which were reported in CIA INFORMATION REPORT, "Situation in Cyprus," 5 April 1948. This strike, which continued from January until May 1948, was eventually settled on terms unfavorable to the union. It virtually exhausted union funds and was a decisive setback for Communist-inspired efforts to control labor in Cyprus. Another strike (of short duration) was called by the same union in August 1948 against the Treadel Asbestos Mines Company at Amiantos, Cyprus. Mine production was continued throughout the strike by non-striking workers. This, as well as the previous strike, was characterized by violence and attempts to intimidate non-strikers. It was instigated by the union to force the company to reinstate a Communist union leader who had been ejected from his mine-owned house. It is understood that the company agreed to reinstate this man, and that strikers are gradually being re-hired by the mining company. In this sense, the outcome of the strike represented a victory for the union; however, the union's attempt to halt mine production failed.

Construction-Labor Situation

3. The Communist Old Trade Union, in August 1947, entered into a contract with the Association of Contractors in Cyprus which provided in effect that for a period of one year, the Old Trade Union would provide all the construction laborers on jobs carried on by the contractors. The association includes virtually all of the important construction contractors on the island. Certain exemptions were later made, but in general the contractors were still bound by the terms of their agreement with the Old Trade Union until its expiration in August 1948, when the Communist union endeavored to secure a renewal of

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its contract with the contractors. The contractors, however, refused to renew and expressed their intention of hiring whomever they desire hereafter, regardless of union affiliation. A series of discussions were held between the contractors and the union leaders, under the auspices of the Cyprus Commissioner of Labor, Mr. H.F. Chudleigh, without result. The Old Union announced its intention of calling a general strike in the construction industry unless its terms were met by the contractors. The attitude of the Commissioner of Labor has appeared somewhat to favor the Old Trade Union, or at least to accord it full recognition as a labor union despite its Communist control. The contractors continued to refuse to come to an agreement, and the anticipated general construction strike materialized on 27 August—as a result of which, most of the construction jobs on the island are now shut down. [REDACTED] however, continues; the personnel hired does not belong to the Old Trade Union. The fact that this job is still in progress draws unwelcome attention from the Communists, who to date have been unsuccessful in interfering seriously with the progress of the work.

Developments to Date

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4. There has been no violence, disorder, or sabotage [REDACTED] to date. The police, through informers, discovered on 2 September that a quantity of dynamite had been brought to Karavas from Nicosia and hidden in the vicinity of [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] It is not clear for what purpose this dynamite was intended. It was to have been delivered to an individual who has been known to have used dynamite in the past in connection with illegal fishing activities. It is a common custom to fish in Cyprus with dynamite. It may also have been intended for use in a campaign of intimidation against non-striking workers who live in Karavas and Lapithos. One attempt to blast a worker's house during the night in Karavas was foiled by the police prior to the discovery of the dynamite. It is possible, but less probable, that the dynamite was intended for destructive purposes against the [REDACTED]

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5. During the present general strike there have been a number of incidents in Nicosia, including an attempt to blow up the house of one of the building contractors against whom the strike is now in progress. Aside from the abortive attempt to blow up a worker's house in Karavas, there have been no incidents in the Kyrenia-Karavas-Lapithos area reported to date. It is believed that this is due to the prompt and creditable action of the police in discovering the hidden store of dynamite and in arresting a number of persons connected therewith, as well as other known trouble makers in the area. To date, the police have arrested seventeen such persons in the villages [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] It is not known, however, whether all the potential trouble-makers have yet been picked up, nor whether all the hidden explosives in the area have yet been discovered.

General

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6. The present situation is critical in the political and labor history of Cyprus. If the strike results in defeat for the Old Trade Union, Communist control of labor on the island will be seriously crippled. The Communists are still suffering from their setback in the Cyprus Mines Corporation strike of last spring, and their union is now believed too weak to support another large-scale strike of long duration. The rightist New Trade Union, which has been prompt in providing workers [REDACTED] during the Old Trade Union strike, now has an opportunity to increase its strength and influence at the expense of the Communists.

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